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World Bank Report on Armenia offers recommendations for a Comprehensive National Disaster Risk Reduction Agenda

Yerevan, December 14, 2009— High level government officials, local and international experts, policy makers, and NGOs held discussions today on *Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management in Armenia*, a report produced by the World Bank and funded by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR.) The report makes recommendations for developing a comprehensive national disaster reduction and preparedness agenda in Armenia, based on the analysis of the country’s natural disaster risks, and the country’s existing systems, mechanisms, and institutional capacity to effectively address them.

According to the report, existing institutional structures, responses, mitigation programs, and overall capacity to prepare and respond to catastrophes in the country are insufficient to overcome a large-scale disaster. The report calls for a comprehensive national mitigation strategy to eliminate overlapping responsibilities and boost the effectiveness of scarce funding. This will require an in-depth review of current legislation, policy, and regulations, and the establishment of priority-based actions and funding.

“Armenia has been steadily moving in the right direction since the 1988 Spitak Earthquake hit the country,” said **Mher Shahgeldyan, Minister of Emergency Situations.** *“However, institutional and budgetary challenges remain, providing opportunities for concerted, phased inter-sectoral, and multi-sectoral actions to be taken at all levels of government.”*

The Report’s recommendations include an adequate coordination of national, international and NGO partners during a disaster; providing funds, equipment and training for emergency response services; and establishing a modern functioning operations center. Since the government’s budget to mitigate, respond and recover from a crisis is inadequate, the report suggests the establishment of a catastrophic insurance facility. The report also advises the government to empower communities to take action, support local-level initiatives, and promote public-private partnerships in disaster reduction.

“More than 80 percent of Armenians are at risk of exposure to catastrophic events,” said **Aristomene Varoudakis, WB Armenia Country Manager.** *“Armenia faces multiple natural hazards that have caused substantial social and economic damage over the past few decades,*



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and will continue to absorb vast sums of scarce resources unless Government takes proactive measures to mitigate and prepare extensively for these hazards

The report was presented during a day-long workshop held in Yerevan today, where different constituencies exchanged views on Armenia's potential natural disaster risks, their socio-economic impacts and opportunities to strengthen the country's ability to respond and become more resilient to natural hazards.

For more information, visit www.worldbank.org.am/

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About GFDRR The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) is a partnership of 21 countries, the ACP Secretariat, the European Commission, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, and the World Bank, committed to helping disaster-prone developing countries and regions reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and adapt to climate change. GFDRR promotes technical and financial assistance to high-risk low- and middle-income countries based on a business model of ex-ante support to mainstream disaster risk reduction in national development strategies and investments, and ex post disaster assistance for sustainable recovery. As part of its mandate, GFDRR promotes global knowledge and good practices, supports initiatives for enhanced global and regional cooperation, and promotes greater South-South cooperation in disaster risk reduction. For more information, visit www.gfdr.org